



THE CONSOLIDATED DISTRICT MODEL

A fire and ambulance special district is ideal for areas that face challenges in staffing or funding emergency services. It also benefits regions with overlapping services, equipment, and processes, which can be consolidated for greater efficiency. Fire departments and ambulance services typically operate in a defined area and plan and equip their organizations without regard to their neighboring agency's resources.

There is significant redundancy, not just in fire and ambulance vehicles but also in hoses, tools, and gear. In Minnesota, neighboring communities can each have millions of dollars invested in large apparatus and ambulances. Many redundancies can be identified by removing municipal boundaries and planning emergency services across a larger region. This allows for the consolidation or reduction of apparatus, equipment, programs, protocols, and sometimes even fire stations, leading to a more efficient and effective emergency response system.

CLOQUET AREA FIRE DISTRICT

The Cloquet Area Fire District is the result of 4 different fire departments consolidating into one combined fire, rescue, and ambulance service organization. Created in 2009, the consolidated district model has allowed the CAFD to eliminate one entire fire station, along with 5 large firefighting and 2 mid-sized vehicles, with a replacement cost exceeding \$4 million today. We have improved our insurance services organization (ISO) rating to a 3 for our entire fire response area and have developed a rapid, capable, and effective response to all areas served. Legislation establishing special districts allows for an equitable distribution of the cost of services provided across the entire service area.

Eliminates

- Duplicative apparatus (expensive- hundreds of thousands to a million plus)
- Duplicative administrations/department leadership
- Standardizes training to strengthen capability and effectiveness
- Individual department responses that can vary greatly due to a lack of coordinated protocols.

Creates

- An equitable response to all areas within the district rather than a different level of capability within neighboring municipalities.
- A better Insurance services organization rating (likely reduces property insurance costs)
- A system that distributes the cost of providing the service equitably amongst all who receive it.
- A pathway to collaboration that will sustain emergency fire, rescue, and EMS response in areas struggling to staff and/or fund their service.
- Standardized responses to provide a more comprehensive, coordinated, and efficient response to a larger geographical area.
- The strength to adapt to increasing service demands and community needs.
- Growth potential for services such as risk reduction, fire prevention, and education that cannot be accomplished with a smaller, separate department.

CONTACT DISTRICT FIRE CHIEF BUHS

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DEDICATED TO PROTECT, SERVE, AND EDUCATE





Saint Louis County

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March 25, 2025

Dear Chair Davids & Chair Gomez:

The St. Louis County Board of Commissioners is pleased to send you this letter to express our support of the Cloquet Area Fire District's effort to obtain legislation that establishes annual fire and ambulance special district aid, and their request for bonding dollars to be used for facilities construction and upgrades.

The Cloquet Area Fire District (CAFD) is a forward-looking organization that was formed in response to the cost-sharing issue of providing ambulance service as well as the challenge of providing ambulance, fire, and rescue emergency services in greater Minnesota. Their efforts have resulted in an operationally sustainable organization that has combined administration, operations, and training of four separate fire departments. For example, through this regional approach to public safety, the CAFD has reduced the fleet originally needed to provide coverage to the area by five large fire trucks. Additionally, these efforts have resulted in an Insurance Services Organization (ISO) rating of three (3) for the entire district, and, subsequently, lower insurance rates for all.

We recognize that the CAFD plays a significant role in our own county's public safety, especially in the 7th (southeast) Commissioner District. With 24-hour, highly trained staff, and advanced life support ambulance intercepts throughout the region, the CAFD routinely responds to complex rescue and firefighting incidents as a support to surrounding fire departments in St. Louis County. However, while their model is one of operational success, CAFD leaders do have concerns regarding the lack of funding available to ensure long-term sustainability (as an unintended consequence of forming a special district under current legislation is the lack of state funding support).

We further acknowledge that CAFD did not benefit from the \$300 million recently issued as public safety aid and currently does not receive annual aid from the state to assist with operations or major capital expenses, such as facilities.

We support the efforts of the CAFD to obtain legislation that establishes annual fire and ambulance special district aid, as well as their request for bonding dollars to be used for facilities construction and upgrades. It is imperative that State lawmakers recognize that ambulance and fire special districts provide solutions to many regional challenges regarding ambulance and fire emergency services, and that they honor that recognition by creating a pathway to ensure state funding is not withheld due to the lack of applicable legislation.

Sincerely,

St. Louis County Board of Commissioners



Commissioner Annie Harala, Chair
1st District



Commissioner Patrick Boyle,
2nd District



Commissioner Ashley Grimm,
3rd District



Commissioner Keith Nelson
4th District



Commissioner Keith Musolf
5th District



Commissioner Paul McDonald
6th District



Commissioner Mike Jugovich, Vice Chair
7th District



Minnesota Professional Fire Fighters

8100 Wayzata Blvd, St Louis Park, MN 55426

April 4th, 2025

Minnesota House of Representatives
Taxes Committee
Committee Co-Chair: Rep. Greg Davids 26B
Committee Co-Chair: Rep. Aisha Gomez 62A
658 Cedar St.
St. Paul, MN 55155

Dear co-chairs, My name is Scott Vadnais, and I'm the President of the Minnesota Professional Firefighters. I represent over 2,000 firefighters, Paramedics, EMS personnel, and Dispatchers. I'm writing today to support HF526. We must provide Fire Districts with the same public funding that city fire departments receive through the Local Government Aid (LGA). HF 526 is a lifeline for struggling Fire Districts that rely solely on funding paid through local tax. This puts an unfair burden on the citizens and the Fire District. The citizens are the ones who suffer the most from this inequality. It is challenging for districts to make capital purchases or to add staffing to keep up with call volume. This legislation would fix a wrong and may even encourage other fire districts in the future. Please consider this letter as MPFF's full support of HF 526.

Scott Vadnais

Scott Vadnais

President

Minnesota Professional Firefighters

February 5, 2025

Representative Jeff Dotseth
2nd Floor, Centennial Office Building
St. Paul, MN 55155

Dear Representative Dotseth:

The Carlton County Board of Commissioners is sending you this letter to express its complete and unanimous support of the Cloquet Area Fire District's effort to obtain legislation that establishes annual fire and ambulance special district aid, and their request for bonding dollars to be used for facilities construction and upgrades.

The Cloquet Area Fire District (CAFD) is a forward-looking organization that was formed in response to the cost-sharing issue of providing ambulance service as well as the challenge of providing ambulance, fire, and rescue emergency services in greater Minnesota. Their efforts have resulted in an operationally sustainable organization that has combined administrations, operations, and training of four separate fire departments. For example, through this regional approach to public safety, the CAFD has reduced the fleet originally needed to provide coverage to the area by five large fire trucks. Additionally, these efforts have resulted in an Insurance Services Organization (ISO) rating of three (3) for the entire district, and, subsequently, lower insurance rates for all.

We as commissioners recognize that the CAFD plays a significant role in our County's public safety. With 24-hour, highly trained staff, and advanced life support ambulance intercepts throughout the region, the CAFD consistently responds to complex rescue and firefighting incidents as a support to surrounding fire departments. However, while their model is one of operational success, CAFD leaders do have concerns regarding the lack of funding available to ensure long-term sustainability (as an unintended consequence of forming a special district under current legislation is the lack of state funding support). As a case in point, these districts did not receive any of the \$300 million recently issued as public safety aid, and currently do not receive annual aid from the state to assist with operations or major capital expenses, such as facilities.

The Carlton County Board of Commissioners supports the efforts of the CAFD to obtain legislation that establishes annual fire and ambulance special district aid, as well as their request for bonding dollars to be used for facilities construction and upgrades. It is imperative that State lawmakers recognize that ambulance and fire special districts provide solutions to many regional challenges regarding ambulance and fire emergency services, and that they honor that recognition by creating a pathway to ensure state funding is not withheld due to the lack of applicable legislation.

Sincerely, and behalf of the Carlton County Board,



Marv Bodie, Chairman